
The Israelite without Guile.

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A

MEMORIAL SERMON

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

Nicholas Hammer Cobbs, D. D.

PREACHED BEFORE THE

Convention of the Diocese of Alabama,

MAY 4, 1861,

BY THE

REV. GEO. F. CUSHMAN, D. D.

RECTOR OF ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, CAHABA.

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Resolved, That 1000 copies of the Sermon delivered by the Rev. GEO. F. CUSHMAN, D. D., at the request of the Clergy, before the Convention of the Diocese of Alabama, on Saturday, the 4th day of May, 1861, commemorative of the life, services and character of our late Right Reverend Father in God, N. H. COBBS, D. D., be printed.

SERMON.

IN the Gospel according to St. John, 1 chapter, 47th verse,

“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.”

In the midst of our Christmas Festival, when the significant evergreen decked our walls, and loud anthems of praise ascended from our hearts, mingled with them, were heard the wailing notes of a funeral dirge; with our festal wreaths, we were called to twine the mournful cypress, meet emblems both, of the warp and woof of human life. While words of hope and joy still dwelt upon our tongues, while the wreathed cross and mitre, the symbols of a Church that never dies, and of the succession of the Apostles, that is never broken, met our eyes, tidings of a sorrow, as profound as ever touched the human heart, broke upon our ears. In the city of his residence, in the bosom of his family, his last prayers winged with the faith, and hope, and peace, that had pervaded his life, his last thoughts given to his Diocese and his God, with most touching words of blessing and of counsel, our good Bishop, our chief earthly Shepherd, our revered Father and Friend, the self-denying, the

holy, the humble man of God was entering upon his last struggle, and achieving his last triumph, the triumph over the powers of death and hell. To him, to die was gain; to us, death was the mighty victor, and in the very zenith of our joy, the waves of sorrow overwhelmed us, and we exchanged the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Not a family, not a church, not many churches, but a whole Diocese, clergy and laity, men, women and children, were, by one sudden stroke, orphaned and bereaved. Mourners all, most fittingly did the drapery of woe tell the world, of stricken hearts, bowed in grief and affliction, under the chastisement of our God.

Nor have we sorrowed alone. From all parts of the Church, and from all orders of men, from the Peaks of Otter, in the great Western valley, in the North, from the fertile plains of our own sister States, has ascended the same wail of woe, the lamentation for a Prince, and a great man fallen in Israel. Grateful tributes to his memory and his worth have flown in, as numerous as spontaneous, all bearing the same burden, all testifying to the power of holiness in his life, and to the kind providence in his death, by which the righteous was taken from the evil to come.

Such a manifestation of sorrow, such tributes to the dead in Christ, are not only consonant to our feelings, they not only fall soothingly upon bruised and breaking hearts, but they are accordant with the teachings

of the Church, in all lands and in every age. The Communion of Saints is one of the fundamental articles of her faith, not only of the Saints who are still pilgrims and sojourners on the earth, but of those who rest from their labors. They rest, but their works do follow them, and

• “Angels, and living Saints, and dead,
 But one communion make.”

In St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, we have the long catalogue of those, of whom the world was not worthy, still held up to us, to be, under Christ, our exemplars and guides. In the most sacred office of our worship, when we kneel around the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of our dying Lord, or when we stand as it were upon the very verge of eternity, by an open grave, with thankful hearts we are called to commemorate the lives and deaths of those, who have fought the fight, and gained the crown. Being dead they yet speak, and before our eyes is fulfilled the prophecy of the Psalmist, that

“The sweet remembrance of the just,
 Shall flourish, when he sleeps in dust.”

And when was a subject more worthy of a tribute, than the man of God, whose life and death we now commemorate, the Israelite without guile; when one to whom could better be applied the testimonies of inspiration to the perfection of the saints? Did Abraham talk with God on the plains of Mamre, did Enoch walk with Him; what was their life, but like his, a

life of holiness and prayer? Did the dying Jacob gather himself up in his bed, and leaning upon the top of his staff, bless his children? Suffer us, a moment, to unveil the sacred secrets of yonder chamber of death. There lay the aged father and Bishop, his frame wasted, his strength exhausted, by months of painful suffering and disease. Already had he entered into the dark valley and shadow of death! But he could not die, without once more beholding the children of his love; with them, and with the wife of his youth, he must break the sacramental bread. They are gathered from far, his daughters, his sons, his sons-in-law, and their wives with them. In a kind providence, no living child was missing. Together they knelt around that sacred bed, together they all partook of that last sacrament; all, save one, whose tender years precluded—and when leaning upon his elbow, the aged father raised his attenuated hand, and invoked the blessing of Heaven, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, fell sweetly upon his own soul. He realized the truth of the promise, that the righteous should not be forsaken, and that his seed should not in vain, beg their bread, the bread of Heaven; and with gushing tears of thankful joy, he could exclaim: behold Lord, here am I, and those that thou hast given me. It was a scene which might well remind us of dying patriarchs. Not afar off, did he resemble those elder saints. Like David, a man after

God's own heart; like Daniel, a man of prayer; like Nathaniel, an Israelite without guile; like St. John, full of tenderness and love; like St. Stephen, a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, he might well have feared the woe, denounced by our Lord when all men speak well of thee, had not, as in the case of the prophet, occasion been taken to find fault with him concerning the Lord his God. He contended valiantly for Christ, and won the universal meed of praise; he contended no less for the Church, the body of Christ, and he, who never had in his heart, a thought of party enmity and strife, incurred partisan censure and reproach.

He was a man of God from his youth, and the whole course of his life did but develop and mature those natural germs of character, which were made perfect by grace. As in the sainted Griswold, it was difficult to say in him, where nature ended, and where grace began, so happily were they combined; and if he was thought ever to set an undue value upon the baptism and catechetical instruction of the Church, it was because he felt himself so much their debtor; because, like Timothy, by his mother and grandmother, he had been early trained, in wisdom's ways. The seeds were thus implanted which, in after years, produced so abundant a harvest of good to himself and the Church; impressions were thus made, which no adverse influences ever impaired or destroyed. It was

to these two facts, his baptism and his catechetical training, that he himself attributed, under God, his life, as a Christian Minister and Bishop.

The Rt. Rev. NICHOLAS HAMNER COBBS, D. D., was born, February 5th, 1795, in Bedford County, Virginia, then a frontier County of that State. The Church in Virginia, at that time, was exceedingly depressed, almost destroyed. If her services were kept alive in the larger cities, her missionaries either had no existence, or had never penetrated into the remote regions of Bedford. It was only by a long, laborious journey, that the young child could, by baptism, be gathered into the fold of Christ; and it was the last Church privilege he enjoyed until he reached the years of manhood. He never heard, he never saw an Episcopal minister; he did not so much as own a copy of the Prayer Book. No one who has ever heard it, can forget the description of his joy, when amidst the rubbish of a country store, a copy was at last found, nor how willingly he parted with a silver dollar, then and to him a large sum, for the long coveted treasure, nor the diligence, with which its pages were studied, as the best commentary upon the Holy Scriptures, until with Adam Clark, he could say, "that next to the Bible, it was the book of his understanding and his heart."

His other early opportunities were no less limited. It was not a day of Academies and Colleges. In an

“old field School,” under the rigid discipline of a Scotch Presbyterian schoolmaster, for whose memory, he ever felt a profound respect, he laid the deep foundations of what was afterwards a ripe, not to say a critical scholarship. It was here, he acquired that broad Scotch pronunciation, which often characterised him, and that accuracy of ear, for a false quantity, whether in Latin, or in English, which his Clergy and Candidates for Orders have so much reason to remember. But limited as these opportunities were, and they were all the educational training he ever had, save such as was self-acquired, they were not continued long. At the early age of seventeen, we find him thrown upon his own resources, and he himself became a teacher, a calling which he laboriously and faithfully pursued, during all the best years of his life.

It was during those years that he found, and reaped the benefit of the few private libraries, scattered among the families of that part of Virginia. The clergy, mostly from the mother-land, had brought with them many of the treasures of English theology, and the ponderous tomes had become precious heir looms, which like coats of arms, were handed down from father to son. The youthful teacher, the toils of the day ended, made the leisure, as he had the taste, to delve long and deep, amid those buried mines of learning; he slaked, if he could not altogether quench his thirst, in “those pure wells of English undefiled.”

Multum non multa, was his motto, and again and again, he re-perused those few great folios, until the mastery of their contents repaid his toil. Thus, among the Peaks of Otter, by the light of his midnight lamp, the voluminous works of those who were the great bulwarks of the Reformation, were the subject of his study and thought, until he became, himself a workman thoroughly furnished.

Bishop COBBS was never a man to make a display of his reading and learning. His ambition never ran in that direction; but to his friends, to those who were admitted to his familiar converse, and to whom he brought out treasures new and old, he appeared, as he truly was, not only a christian Bishop, but a Scholar and a learned Divine. His zeal and industry atoned for his want of early opportunities, and in the Classics, in English Theology, in Church History, and in Patristic Lore, he was no mean proficient. Never man rated higher the value of learning, no one labored more to raise its drooping standard in our land. If in these later days he was the earnest and unfailing advocate of our own great University of the South, it was because he saw in it the realization of his hopes and dreams; because there he believed the twin sisters, religion and learning, were to walk hand in hand, until they attained such fulness of stature, as the world had not yet seen.

It was amid such toil and such recreation, a teacher

by day, and a painful student by night, that Bishop COBBS passed his earliest years. Soon he found pressing upon him the great question of his vocation in life. From early youth, influences alien to the Church, had surrounded him. The Church herself, in her depressed condition, cast down but not destroyed, could offer but little inducement to a worldly mind; for ambition, she had no glittering prize. To share her lot, to take part in her ministry, was to share her poverty and reproach. To lead such a forlorn hope, required no little heroism. The question, however, was soon settled. If there was ever a doubt in his mind, which we neither affirm nor deny, it was determined without long debate for the faith in which he had been baptised, for the Church in Virginia, which however fallen and decayed, was still the Church of Christ. In 1824, we find him at Staunton, applying to be admitted to the holy order of Deacons. He had yet to be confirmed and partake of his first communion; but once before, we believe, had he witnessed the service of the Church. Such, however, was his spotless character, such the testimonials he bore from neighbors and friends, such the necessities of the Church in Virginia—the very application was the best proof of the sincere and self-denying piety of the applicant—that all technical considerations were overruled. He was ordained Deacon, by the Rt. Rev. Bishop MOORE, in Trinity Church, Staunton, May 23,

1824, and the same day was confirmed, and for the first time communed.

The object of his laborious journey thus happily accomplished, he returned to his native Bedford, which was thenceforth to be the scene of his labors. No Parish, no Church edifice, awaited his coming, no comfortable stipend was provided for his support, no little band of communicants was there to cheer his hopes. The Church, whose minister he had become, retained hardly a traditional reverence and love. It was emphatically, missionary ground, a virgin soil. A young wife, now his honored and revered relict, a growing family looked to him only, for support. One fact was thus made clear, he could not relax his daily toil. He must live, if he would work for Christ; he could only live, as did St. Paul, by the labor of his hands. He felt no less, that a woe was upon him, if he preached not the Gospel. A wide and perishing field was before him, and he must enter upon its arduous labors. He did enter upon it, with Christian faith and courage and zeal. He put his hand to the plough, and he had as little wish, as thought, to look back. In the intervals of his daily toil, in private parlors, in empty mills, near at home, a hundred and fifty miles away, to gathered crowds, to two or three, he proclaimed Christ, and His Church,—he reared the standard of the Cross. In his public ministrations, in his private intercourse, in the social circle, at

the bedside of the sick and dying, the everlasting gospel was his theme. Like the Apostles, he went out without scrip; like them, he ministered from house to house, looking to God only for his reward.

The people had known him from his youth up, and then, as always, he had a good report of them without. An interest was soon awakened in the Church, whose self-sacrificing minister he was. Friends gathered around it, and in the first year of his labors, he not only was made hopeful by the prospects of the future, but by the substantial results of the present. In another year, hard, laborious, five days in school, two spent in the service of the Church, seeking at far outlying stations the lost sheep of Israel, and two brick Churches, in what had been the wilderness of Bedford, crowned the landscape. The two have since become four, and one of them, Hamner Parish, called by his name, will hand down to latest generations, the memory of Bedford's faithful missionary. Thus had he toiled, taking no thought for himself, having no care for objects beyond his own sphere of labor, and to his astonishment and surprise, though not to ours, the fame he would not seek, sought him. He was a burning and shining light, and could not be hid. Other fields prayed for such a husbandman, other flocks wished for such a shepherd. He had been scarce two years ordained, but one year a priest, when we hear that apostolic man, Bishop MOORE, whose

testimony is equivalent to words of graven gold, saying:

* "Since the ordination of Mr. COBBS, several offers have been made to him, by the acceptance of either of which, his situation would certainly have been improved, but with a magnanimity of mind, which rendered him superior to pecuniary considerations, and with that regard to the infant state of the Church, which reflects the greatest credit on his piety, he declined them all, and determined to remain in his present situation."

The circumstance was characteristic of the man. Bishop COBBS was never one to confer with flesh and blood, no selfish thought ever found harbor in his heart. Here were a few sheep in the wilderness, and he never seemed to question, but he must stay, to guard the flock, which he himself had gathered; here was an ample field, and it never entered into his mind, at whose cost it was cultivated. So, for fifteen years, he stood manfully at his post; his life, health, strength, and talents, all consecrated upon an altar, that knew no interested thought, or act. Into the details of those years, we will not enter, nor is there need. He worked ever, by one pattern and rule. We have already given the testimony of Bishop MOORE. In 1830, Bishop MEADE speaks no less grateful words. Reporting a visitation to his Parish, he says:

† "I cannot leave this parish, without noticing how the rich blessing of heaven has been poured out, on the zealous exertions and affectionate preaching of Mr. COBBS. But a few years since, and there were not more than two or three communicants in the County, and not a place of public worship belonging to the Church;

* Hawks' Journals Virginia Convention, pp. 196-7.

† Hawks' Journals of Virginia Convention, p. 241.

“now there are more than seventy communicants, and three places
 “of public worship, where service is regularly performed, besides
 “many private houses, which are freely thrown open for religious
 “exercises. But what is far more important is, that good evidence
 “is afforded of the prevalence of real piety, and it is pleasing to
 “perceive the animation and holy zeal, with which the services of
 “the Church are conducted.”

It was during these laborious years of parochial life, that those conservative and sound views of the Church, in the profession of which, Bishop COBBS afterwards lived and died, were developed and matured. He had imbibed them from the fountain head, from the great exponents of the English Church, and from the Word of God. The adverse influences, which surrounded him, had, it may be, for awhile kept them in abeyance, and it was not until the experience of parish life had taught him, that the truest practice can only be combined with the truest theory, that they assumed their normal place in his mind and heart. To preach Christ was his first duty, as it was his chief pleasure; to preach the Church was a duty no less. They were parts of one whole, and the question did not, could not rise in his mind, which of the two he should forbear to press. His office was to proclaim the whole counsel of God. It was not only duty, even in Bedford, he believed it policy. In the field of labor in which God had placed him, amid the diversities of heresy and schism, with multiplying sects on every side, necessity constrained him to set forth plainly and distinctly the divine origin and apostolic claims of “the

sect everywhere spoken against." In his report to the Virginia Convention of 1833, he says:

* "Some valuable additions have been made to the Communion; the members generally are becoming more decidedly attached to the distinctive principles and doctrines of the Church. In obedience to a resolution of the last Convention, the Rector has endeavored, by the circulation of Episcopal books and tracts, to instruct the people in the true principles of the Church; a duty, the importance and necessity of which, he has been taught by painful experience. There is also another cause for encouragement, in the proofs of an increasing confidence in the soundness of our doctrines, and the piety of our members. Plainly many are beginning to see, in these perilous times, when dangerous heresies are boldly propagated, and when contention and strife, with many other fruits of the flesh, are encouraged by the divisions of new sects, continually multiplying, that our ancient Church presents to the humble and honest inquirer after truth, a place of quiet and an ark of safety."

The trumpet, we think, gives no uncertain sound. These views so announced, his views upon the sacraments, and especially upon Baptismal Regeneration, in the belief of which, he stood side by side with Bishop MOORE, his thorough reception of the doctrine of the Apostolic Succession, his later attempts at Petersburg, to revive the long disused Holy Days of the Church, his acknowledged teachings in the pulpit and in private, furnish all the proof we need, that as a Churchman, he was an Israelite without guile. Bishop COBBS was never one to stir up controversy and strife. In his unaffected humility, in his gentleness, and love of peace, he never, unnecessarily, obtruded adverse opinions upon the attention of others. He was not

* Hawks' Journals of Virginia Convention, p. 293.

a man of positive assertions, he rather hinted, than expressed a difference, he dwelt in social converse upon points of harmony and union. To some, he might seem to waver and to yield, when no rock was firmer. It was so in all things. In all his intercourse with his clergy, in his Episcopal Addresses, in converse with a vain student, an aged servant, a brother Bishop, the same characteristic appears, the same christian modesty spake from his tongue. Dogmatism was no element of his character. When other men affirmed, he perhaps would speak by interrogation, but his question implied no less certainty than their solemn oaths. He was not arrogant, opinionative, positive, but he was firm and decided. Let principle be involved, and no appliances could move him. We repeat, the trumpet gave no uncertain sound. The views of the Church, and of her doctrines, learned by painful study in the Word of God and the Book of Prayer, and confirmed by the experience of a parish priest, which had gradually and surely matured in the earlier years of his ministry, were the rule of his life, as they were among his chief consolations in death.

During the later years of his residence at Bedford, Bishop COBBS was appointed by the Convention of the Diocese, Chaplain to the University of Virginia. The request that such appointments should be made, to the joy of many hearts, had come from the Univer-

sity itself. From its origin its relations, not to the Church, but to our common Christianity, had been most sensitive and delicate. A dark shadow of suspicion rested upon it, as if its object had been no less the promotion of scepticism and infidelity, than of learning. As a sequence of our connection with France, during the Revolutionary war, and of the subsequent overthrow in that country, of all respect for religion and law, the principles of jacobinism had obtained an extraordinary foothold in our land. To the ignorant, the unwary, and the young they came, in what seemed the guise of friendship and gratitude. It was to meet such a state of things, that Chaplains were first required. When now in her turn, application was made to the Church in Virginia, the general voice pointed to the humble priest of Bedford, as the man who possessed the needed qualifications, for so responsible a post. The simplicity of his character, the purity of his life, the saintliness, which stood out in every thought and word and deed, the spiritual unction of his earnest and persuasive eloquence, which, though not endowed with the graces of oratory and art, went direct to the heart, his zeal and energy, his talents and scholarship, all commanded the respect and love of the young intellect gathered there. Brief as was his Chaplaincy, it resulted in great benefit to the University and to the Church, and in an increased reputation and honor to himself, and at its close,

despite the rule of denominational rotation, request was made, that his term of service might be renewed. After the lapse of so many years, he is still remembered with affection in those classic walls, and his name is handed reverently down, as the name of the Chaplain, who was an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.

But the time had come, when Bishop COBBS must bid farewell to his first, perhaps his best loved field of labor. He must turn his back upon those Peaks of Otter, in whose shadow, as he was born, so he had hoped to live and die. There he had passed his early years—there he had labored, and seen the fruits of his labor—where once were none, a hundred communicants now kneeled. He had twined himself around the hearts of that people, with cords of love that no change of time or circumstance could sunder. With spontaneous affection they loved him in word and deed, and a farm of two thousand dollars' value was, in part, their thank-offering for the sacrifices he had made. His very presence brought to them comfort, and joy, and protection, and they felt safer, for seeing the man of God pass daily by. It was the divine will, they must give him up, but it could only be with streaming eyes and breaking hearts. Their love could know no diminution. Other men might occupy, it was still his parish; to them always, the Bishop of Alabama, was the Priest of Bedford. What a scene was that, when

he visited the home of his nativity, a Bishop in the Church of God; when he laid his hands, first upon the eldest daughter of his heart and love, now we trust a saint in heaven, and then upon the aged father, who had waited thus long for the consolation of Israel. It was a time of mingled sorrow and joy. The young men wept, the strong men bowed themselves, the mothers and daughters in Israel would have gladly given themselves to him, who had sacrificed so much for them. Our own eyes fill with tears, the pen falls from our hand, and we can only say, if he was much worthy, Bedford loved much.

But he had outgrown the narrow sphere; weightier responsibilities devolved upon him, and the call of duty must be obeyed. Owing to circumstances which we need not detail, the parish at Petersburg had come to be a source of anxious thought to the then Assistant Bishop of Virginia, and he himself, for several months, had had temporary charge of it. It needed a man of peculiar qualifications, and he urged the parish upon Bishop COBBS, who had previously declined a call to the Church at Norfolk. He entered upon it with faith, he cultivated it with diligence and zeal, and the qualities, which had given him his first success, still followed him, and the new parish reaped the fruits. Difficulties were harmonized, the Church was built up in numbers and in faith. The four years he spent there, were like years of Pentecost. Soon his Church

would not hold the worshippers, and a new parish was organized, and a new Church built by his congregation. As in his first, so in his second parish, he acquired the strongest hold upon the hearts of his people. They loved him with an enthusiasm, which still survives, for he served them in the day of the "general awakening." Says Bishop MEADE,

* "His ministry, during the few years of its continuance, was "very prosperous in all respects. During that period, a general "awakening of the souls of the people of Petersburg took place, "and ministers of all denominations labored faithfully, in prayers, "and sermons, and exhortations, private and public. Instead of "discouraging such extraordinary efforts, for so extraordinary an "outpouring of the Spirit of God, as was granted, Mr. COBBS came "behind none, and went before some, in the frequency of his religious exercises. The result was, that no congregation was more "highly blest in the results thereof. I laid my hands on the heads "of ninety-three at that time, who for the last three months, had "been receiving the daily instructions of their minister, either public or private, and of such other ministers, as he was able to bring "to his help."

His ministry at Petersburg continued but four years, and at their expiration, Bishop COBBS felt constrained, not only to resign his parish, but painful as was the severance, to bring his connection with the Diocese of Virginia to a close. In that Diocese, as in his parishes, he had for nineteen years been largely honored; to his dying day, he loved it with Virginia pride. There was hardly a post of duty, or of responsibility, which he had not been called to fill. In her councils, his wise caution, his prudent fore-

* Bishop Meade's *Old Families and Churches in Virginia*, vol. 1, p. 443.

sight, his temperate zeal were ever at her service; his voice was ever raised, in behalf of whatever could promote her prosperity and harmony. In her missions, in the promotion of the religious instruction of servants, in his labors for her educational institutions, he came no whit behind the first and chiefest. No man had a wider influence, or a more commanding position. He was respected by the clergy; it is not too much to say, that he was the idol of the laity. When then it was proposed to elect an assistant to Bishop MEADE, it surprised no one, that the name of Bishop COBBS should rise, spontaneous to the lips of men; it surprised many, when before any ballot was had, the present Bishop of North Carolina arose in his seat, and by authority announced, that Bishop COBBS could not suffer his name to be put in nomination. Into the reasons that led to that determination, we do not propose to enter. The time has not yet come, it may never come, when the history of that transaction can be truthfully written, without partiality and without prejudice. It was a subject upon which Bishop COBBS was studiously reticent and reserved, making rare allusions to it, even to his most confidential friends. He was a man of peace, he looked upon strife, and party warfare, as he did upon sin; as the bane of the Church and the destroyer of souls. We can not, now and here, so disregard the lesson of his life, as to enter upon the controversy

which has arisen over his grave. Mindful of his gentleness, his meekness, and forbearance, we will only say, that his name was, at his own instance, withdrawn, and for the sake of "the things that make for peace," he was thenceforth, a man self-banished from his native State. If after that withdrawal, a considerable minority of the laity still voted for him, if strong men wept, in the bitterness of their disappointment, it was only the more honorable testimony, to his worth and their love.

Bishop COBBS had served for fifteen years, in the General Convention of the Church, as one of the Clerical Deputies from the Diocese of Virginia. In 1841, members of the Church, emigrants to Texas, then an Independent Republic, had applied to the Church in the United States, to send them a Bishop. It was a post of very great responsibility and importance. The House of Bishops, zealous ever for the extension of the Church, were forward to comply with the request, and Bishop COBBS was by them nominated, as a suitable person to enter upon that great field. From motives of policy and expediency, the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies declined to unite in the preliminary action of the House of Bishops, and to his great relief and joy, the name of Bishop COBBS was not sent down to them for confirmation. Pending that matter, he underwent much trouble and distress, lest the stern mandate of duty should call him, in the acceptance of

that post, to the sacrifice, as it would then have been, of his native land. His nomination was in every way honorable, but such was his shrinking modesty and self abnegation, that to members of his own immediate family, singular as it may seem, the knowledge of it has only come from other sources since his death. He was never the trumpeter of his own fame.

It was in 1843 that Mr., now by creation of Hobart College, Geneva, N. Y., Dr. COBBS, took charge of St. Paul's Church, Cincinnati. He had hardly entered upon his duties there, when the Church in Indiana, hastened to ratify the endorsement of the House of Bishops, of his suitableness to be a Bishop in the Church of Christ. He was elected to that office by the Clergy, and only a doubt of his acceptance of the position prevented the concurrence of the Laity. Thus happily, he was reserved for us, and in May, 1844, at Greensboro', the Church in Alabama, by unanimous vote of her Clergy and Laity, invited Dr. COBBS to her Episcopate. We were then, one of the least of the tribes of Judah. Like his first parish, Alabama was, at that time, with emphasis, missionary ground; it presented almost an unbroken soil. A Diocese of fifty thousand square miles, destitute of even the few facilities of travel, which it now possesses, a Church in its very infancy, with but four hundred and fifty communicants, scattered over that vast surface, with a climate, however undeservedly, of bad repute, pledg-

ing but an insufficient support, which was to be eked out by additional labors as a parish minister, could hold out no tempting prospect to a man of large family, who was comfortably settled in the great Queen City of the West. Twice before, Alabama had filled its vacant headship, so far as election could go, and for reasons which no one dared gainsay, it had been declined. Across the waters of the Ohio, was heard by Bishop COBBS, the Macedonian cry, "come over and help us," a cry to which he could not, would not shut his ears. God, duty, the Church said go, and to hear was to obey. He accepted the providential call, was consecrated in Philadelphia, October 20, 1844, and in the month of November, had already entered upon his work, his great venture of faith.

From that day until he was taken from us, his manner of life is known to us all, and we are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, he behaved himself among us; exhorting, and comforting, and charging every one of us, as a father doth his children, that we should walk worthy of God. We do not propose to go into any minute history of his Episcopate, nor to enter into any particular analysis of his character. We leave the first for his future biographer to do; we shrink from any attempt at the last, when we remember the eloquent tribute of the Bishop of Georgia, and the brief but comprehensive resolutions of the clergy. In our remaining space,

we can only point out some of the more obvious facts and traits of his successful administration of the Diocese.

We notice first and foremost, the extraordinary hold, Bishop COBBS had upon the affections of his people; the wonderful union, and harmony, which characterised all orders and degrees of men under his jurisdiction. As he went through his diocese, every where preaching the gospel, as well by his presence as his words, he won his way to all hearts. He intuitively inspired, not only respect, but confidence and love, as well out of, as in the Church. "That is a good man, a sincere christian man," was the one, universal voice. In his presence, before his lowly piety, wickedness itself stood abashed, and those who feared not God, nor regarded man, respected him. Without compromising a principle, he acquired the good will of all, and when he approached, contentions for modes of faith died away in silence. It was ever in his mind, that his mission was, if possible, to live peaceably with all men. Ministers of an alien faith, were his friends in life, they stood at his bedside, to learn how a Christian Bishop died, they paid to his lifeless remains the last offices of friendship and love. Look to his writings, listen to his words, and he spared not to proclaim what he believed to be the counsel of God; but he made no enemies, either to the truth, or to himself, because he spake the truth in love.

But it was in the Church, that our Bishop found the strongest, and to him the dearest proofs of love. In the sixteen years of his Episcopate, confidence in him never for a moment wavered, but grew stronger and stronger, until the day of his death. His diocese stood around him, as one man, and one heart. Never was a Bishop, who had a stronger hold upon his Clergy and Laity;—it was a revered Father and loving children,—never was a diocese more happily united. His will was ours, his slightest wish was to us, imperative as law. His rule, which we never felt, was absolute, at the very time we sighed, that he would not rule. This perhaps, was one of the secrets of his great influence; what he would not seek, was freely given to him. Most remarkable was the proof of our perfect trust in him, a proof without precedent in the whole history of our confederate Church, when two years ago, by a formal vote of our Convention, as unanimous as his election was, the entire control of our Diocesan Missions was confided to his hands. It was a confidence, which the Church of the Diocese nobly endorsed the same year, by doubling its contributions. It was then we passed the formal vote, but that vote was only the recorded expression of what had been, from the beginning, our practice. It gave him no powers, which he had not, by general approbation and consent, always exercised.

The confidence thus reposed in Bishop COBBS was

well deserved, and especially upon the part of his clergy. He had them, in life and in death, ever in his heart; he was at all times, their considerate helper and friend. In all their troubles and discouragements, in their hopes and joys, they found in him, the truest sympathy; for them he was ever ready to make any sacrifice. In his visitations, he labored to strengthen their hands, and increase their influence, rather than his own; again and again, privately and publicly, he lifted up his voice, to protest against their inadequate support. It was one of the cardinal rules of his Episcopate, that he was to be the father and friend of his clergy; he never failed them. The simple words, "Bishop come," would start him, upon a journey of a hundred miles and more, to suit their convenience and comfort. He was not so much their overseer, as their fellow worker, and in the midst of his own great cares, he spared not, to help them cultivate their allotted portion of the Lord's vineyard. He came not merely to preach and confirm. Not infrequently have we known him, in a few days, to visit every family in a parish, rich and poor, to leave with all a word of counsel and a blessing. The kindest love thus marked all his intercourse with his clergy and diocese. For the sorrowing and the afflicted, he had the most tender sympathy; for the sinful and the erring, the most forbearing meekness and patience. He strove to save, not destroy the lost sheep; to bind

up, and not bruise the breaking heart; to console, and not repel the penitent. Most truly did he so administer justice as not to forget mercy, and if ever he had occasion to act as judge, it was so that he himself seemed to endure the punishment, and he thus gained by love what severity had lost. With such a Bishop there could be no room for discordant views and divided counsels, and it was not the least of his merits that in his diocese the voice of party was never heard. He prayed for the peace of Jerusalem, and the blessings of peace followed him, in a Church, so trained by his precepts and example, that like Zion, it was a city at unity in itself.

Bishop COBBS in accepting the Episcopate of Alabama, did not underrate the difficulties he would have to encounter and overcome. He counted the cost before he began to build, and realized that it was a venture of faith. In large portions of the diocese, the Church was altogether unknown; in other parts, the strongest and most unfounded prejudices existed against her. Her doctrines were not understood; her practice was misrepresented. She was, they said, a cold, formal, dead Church, having but a name to live, with the form of godliness, but not the power. That ignorance was to be enlightened, that prejudice must be lived down and overcome. Before the Church in Alabama could have any real growth, or acquire any real strength, it must prove its claims to the respect

of men. It must shew by living example, as well as by precept, that it was possible for a Christian man to live within its pale. Upon that one point, all her future depended. How admirably Bishop COBBS worked out that theorem,—how in his own person, he demonstrated that truth, and so laid the foundation of future success, we all know. It was for him to prepare the soil, and sow the seed; to him we owe the harvest already reaped, and shall owe, in great part at least, that which is still to come. Like the Apostle, “in journeyings often,” in protracted absence from home, in wearisome waiting upon our water courses, in heat and cold, over roads, to which even courtesy could scarce give the name, by labors that might well have exhausted more rugged men, he penetrated into every part of his large diocese, and carried with him the gospel and the Church. Says Bishop ELLIOTT, “he was one of the holiest men, I ever met.” He wrought, that all Alabama met him, and endorsed the truth, and under its influence the diocese grew and flourished.

Bishop COBBS was not what Latimer would call “an unpreaching prelate.” He magnified that part of his office. It was to him an ordinance of the gospel, and he was never so much at home as when in the pulpit. After a weary journey, it was rest to him, at night, to proclaim to a handful, or to a gathered multitude, the unsearchable riches of Christ. His preach-

ing was plain, simple, and direct. He sought no aid of ornament, he indulged in no flights of fancy, he made no vain display of learning. He preached Christ, not himself; and not himself preached Christ, but the Church through him. No one knew this distinction better than he, who was often heard to say that the preacher in the Church of Christ, was no mere man of thirty, or three score, but a man hoary with eighteen hundred years. With a plain, Saxon style, which was all his own,—a style toned down by severe discipline, from that ornate exuberance of metaphor and ornament, which characterised his earlier productions, when poetry and song guided his pen, and warmed his heart; with a peculiar delivery, he never failed to arrest attention, and to reach the heart. There have been few preachers more effective. If not an orator in the popular sense, he had one of the best elements of oratory. His sermons were realities; he believed what he said. Every word, and tone, and gesture bore the impress of sincerity. His sermons were brief, confined generally to a single point, and at their close—it is the truest test of merit—his hearers thought not of the speaker, but of themselves and their sins; they turned away, ever with the purpose of repentance and amendment in their hearts, and with its expression upon their lips. He captivated, not their intellects, but their hearts, and out of the stores of his large experience, the Chris-

tian was edified and instructed, and the sinful persuaded, and eager multitudes hung upon his words, for he spake to them with the eloquence of sincerity and truth, and with the power of God.

Bishop COBBS was not a man ambitious of authorship; he shrank from observation with a woman's timidity. Apart from his Episcopal Addresses, his appearances before the public were most rare; some seven occasional sermons make up the tale. In nearly every such case, his words sank deep into the Christian heart, and in the form of Tracts, have been widely circulated, some of them in many editions. They were plain, pointed, practical, the fruit of ripened wisdom, and long experience, and of that rare quality, common sense, which he possessed in an eminent degree. The same remark will apply to his Addresses to his Convention. There was not a word in them for display, no circumlocution, no sounding phrase. He seldom traveled beyond the record, he spake for Alabama, not for the world. A brief detail of his official acts; brief the better to conceal his immense amount of work; a few plain, practical suggestions touching the interests of the diocese, and the analysis is complete. There was no exordium, no peroration, very seldom such a digression, as when his heart broke out into that eloquent tribute to the memory of that "great hearted shepherd," Bishop DOANE. But upon what concerned his diocese, what would promote its

interests, we had line upon line; here he never wearied. His warnings to his clergy against pseudo-catholicity, against the errors of Rome and Geneva, against all innovations upon the ancient usages of the Church; his exhortations to combine in our preaching, "evangelic truth with apostolic order," to set forth, side by side, as cardinal truths, the doctrine of justification by faith, and the importance of the sacraments and offices of the Church—the body and soul of Christ's religion as he termed them—to proclaim everywhere, and at all times, Christ and His Church, these still ring in our ears,—may their influence never die in our hearts. Our Diocesan Missions, the subject of his last as of his first Address to us, our Diocesan School, the Religious Instruction of Servants, which had been the life-long subject of his interest, the Catechetical Training of Children, the Widow and Orphan's Society, the Endowment of the Episcopate, the due Support of the Clergy, these were the themes upon which he dwelt, themes to him ever new, because ever interesting, because upon them our growth as a church and diocese depended.

No notice of Bishop COBBS could do him justice, that omitted the fact, that he was a man given to hospitality. In him, it was a virtue in excess. There was ever a seat at his table for the stranger and the friend; in his house guests were never wanting. It was thronged from all parts of the diocese, we might

say, from all parts of the land. He lived to make others happy, and was never himself so happy, as when his bounteous board was crowded with many friends. With his genial spirit and kindly heart, for in his religion there was nothing forbidding or morose, he entered into their feelings, and especially of the young, and made, as well as shared, their pleasure, and a day at the Bishop's was always a day of joy.

His charity was as unbounded as his hospitality. It was not in his heart to resist any appeal of distress, and with the poor he would have shared his last penny, and his last morsel of bread. There was but one measure to his generosity, the limit of his means and power. While the barrel of meal wasted not, and the cruise of oil did not fail, whole families of the poor lived upon his bounty; and if his resources were like to be exhausted, he would quietly turn away the word of caution from a friend, with "Jehovah Jireh," the Lord will provide.

The success of the administration of his diocese by Bishop COBBS was answerable to his great qualities. He found it weak, a Church with no popular prestige, an unsettled and rapidly changing Clergy. In the Convention that elected him, but eight clerical names appear on the roll, as entitled to a vote and seat. He left it united, vigorous, and growing rapidly in numbers and in strength. An endowed Episcopate, a Widow and Orphan's Society, whose vested funds will

compare favorably with those of like societies, in the older and wealthier dioceses, a flourishing Diocesan School, the parishes more than doubled, the clergy and communicants quadrupled, the alms and oblations many-fold increased, a vigorous system of missions, these are facts that make his monument and speak his praise. He was not only a good, but a successful Bishop, even as the world counts success, by actual results. He was however a pioneer; his time and labor were spent in laying broad and deep foundations, and not upon the visible walls of the temple. How he labored, what success he achieved, is hidden still in the womb of time, but as long as the Church in Alabama shall have any existence, she will reap the fruit of the toils and prayers of her first loved Bishop, and her children's children shall rise up to call him blessed.

Sorrowfully fell upon the great heart of his diocese, and upon the Church at large, the mournful tidings of the last sickness, and death of Bishop COBBS; "such a providence," say neighboring Bishops, "is not the least ominous of the signs of the times." In the midst of great political convulsions, in the very hour of his country's downfall, amid the expiring throes of the Union, which he loved with patriot heart, and with a heart no less true to his native South, when Alabama was proclaiming her own independence and sovereignty, January 11, 1861, the aged saint put his armor off, and drew his last breath. Not unexpected

to him, was the stroke so sudden to us. He lived "as ever in his great Taskmaster's eye," and as in life, so in death, was he ready to glorify his Lord and Christ. What a scene did that dying chamber present, what a triumph of Christian faith, what meekness and patience in suffering, what lowly trust in the goodness and mercy of God. It was the end of suffering, of toil and care; it was the beginning of rest and life, the life that dies no more. When the bright sun was in its mid career, at the hour of high noon, in the bosom of his family, surrounded by his weeping clergy, when all was silence, save the sobs that could not be suppressed, and the words of solemn prayer, life's great battle ended, and he closed his eyes upon time, to open them in eternity. His soul winged her flight to the realms above, and the faithful servant of God, the Israelite without guile entered upon his everlasting reward. Without a murmur or a sigh, with the expression upon his lips, of what had been ever the faith in his heart,

"In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling,"

he sank gently to his rest, "as if it had been a breathing sleep." We bore him reverently to his tomb, the heavens weeping sadly the while—the sobs and tears of gathered multitudes, attesting the depths of their sorrow, and the greatness of his worth. Humility was the characteristic of his life, it was only in death, that we could bear our willing witness, with the purple pall, and the insignia of woe, that a great man, and

a Prince, had fallen in Israel; it is only at his grave, henceforth to be to us a pilgrim shrine, that we can pay the meet tribute to the memory of one, whose name the Church "will never willingly let die."

Brethren, and friends, at your request and by your suffrage, we have thus feebly attempted to commemorate the life and services of our revered Bishop, and Father in God. How imperfectly, how inadequate to our great theme, you can bear witness; amid what burden of parochial and scholastic cares prepared, only ourselves can know. But whatever defects there be, our last words, or rather not ours, but his, shall redeem. From the battlements of heaven, the spirit of our Bishop still looks down upon the diocese he so much loved; from the depths of his grave, there comes a voice to us, the children of his love, which we can but heed. In his waning hours, he uttered words, to be forever graven in our hearts, forever seen in our lives. It is not we, but your dying Bishop, now a saint with God, who exhorts you to

"Be men of God:—men of peace, men of brotherly kindness, men of charity; self-denying men, men of purity, men of prayer; men striving to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and laboring and preaching with an eye single to His glory and the salvation of souls."

Such were the last counsels to us his Clergy, of the dying Israelite, the Israelite without guile.









